

Internationalizing Islamophobia: Anti-Islamophobic Practices from the Runnymede Trust to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation*

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Abstract

Especially since the September 11 attacks, the position of Muslim communities living in Western countries has become under focus. Many Muslim political leaders, activists as well as scholars have pointed to the existence of Islamophobia, or an irrational fear or prejudice towards Islam and Muslims, as the cause for discrimination against Muslims. The literature on Islamophobia has grown, various governmental programs have been implemented to repress it, while scholars developed means to measure it as an attitude. Rather than focusing on Islamophobia itself, this paper seeks to shift the focus on anti-Islamophobia practices of various organizations, especially the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. It looks at the emergence of anti-Islamophobic discourse in the 90s, how this discourse isolates and problematizes Islamophobia by redefining what Muslims stand for. This paper argues that anti-Islamophobic practices cannot be simply taken as a strategy to combat Islamophobia. While it drives its legitimacy from repression of xenophobia and discrimination, it simultaneously seeks to govern by promoting certain ways of social co-existence.

Keywords: Islamophobia, International Organizations, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Governance, Discourse

İslamofobyayı Uluslararasılaştırmak: Runnymede Vakfından İslam İşbirliği Örgütü'ne İslamofobyaya Karşı Pratikler

Özet

11 Eylül saldırılarından beri Batı toplumlarında yaşayan Müslüman toplumların konumu üzerine yapılan çalışmalar artmıştır. Pek çok bilim insanı, Müslüman siyasi lider ve eylemci; Müslümanlara yönelik ayrımcılığın nedeni olarak İslamofobyaya, ya da İslam ve

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Müslümanlara yönelik akıl dışı korku ve önyargının varlığına dikkat çekmiştir. Bir yandan İslamofobyaya üzerine olan yazın büyüyüp, hükümetler bu sorunu ortadan kaldırmak için çeşitli programlar uygulamaya başlarken diğer yandan da bilim insanları bir bireysel bir tutum olarak İslamofobyaya'yı ölçmeye girişmişlerdir. Bu çalışma ise, İslamofobyaya üzerine odaklanmak yerine çeşitli örgütlerin ve özellikle de İslam İşbirliği Örgütü'nün İslamofobyaya karşıtı pratiklerine dikkati çekmeye çalışmaktadır. Çalışma, 90'lı yıllarda İslamofobyaya karşıtı söylemin ortaya çıkışını, ve bu söylemin Müslümanların neyi temsil ettiğini yeniden tanımlayarak İslamofobyaya'nı nasıl izole ettiğini ve sorunsallaştırdığını incelemektedir. Bu çalışma İslamofobyaya karşıtı pratiklerin basitçe bu olguyla mücadele etmek için uygulanan bir strateji olarak görülemeyeceğini iddia eder. İslamofobyaya meşruiyetini yabancı düşmanlığı ve ayrımcılıkla mücadeleden alırken aynı zamanda belirli toplumsal bir arada yaşama şekillerini öne çıkartmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İslamofobyaya, Uluslararası Örgütler, İslam İşbirliği Örgütü, Yönetişim, Söylem

**فوبيا؛ الإسلامو لمواجهة تطبيقات : (الإسلام من الخوف) فوبيا الإسلامو تدويل
الإسلامي التعاون منظمة إلى رونيميدي وقف من بدء
شريف أونور باعجه جيك**

الملخص:

منذ أحداث الحادي عشر من ايلول/ سبتمبر زاد عدد الدراسات التي اجريت حول وضع المجتمعات الاسلامية التي تعيش داخل المجتمعات الغربية. وقد أشار العديد من رجال العلم والزعماء السياسيين والناشطين في هذا المجال الى الاسلاموفوبيا او الشعور بالخوف والانحياز غير العقلاني كسبب من أسباب التحيز ضد الإسلام والمسلمين. فمن ناحية بدأت الكتابات التي تتناول الاسلاموفوبيا بالزيادة، مما دعا الحكومات الى تطبيق برامج مختلفة بهدف حل هذه المشكلة، ومن ناحية اخرى بدأ رجال العلم تحليل وتقييم الاسلاموفوبيا كجهود منفردة من قبلهم. أما هذه الدراسة فإنها تسعى الى لفت الأنظار الى جهود المؤسسات المختلفة، خاصة منظمة التعاون الاسلامي، في تناول التطبيقات التي تواجه الاسلاموفوبيا، بدلا من التركيز على الاسلاموفوبيا نفسها. وتبرز هذه الدراسة ظهور الأفكار والمقولات التي كانت تواجه الاسلاموفوبيا في التسعينات من القرن الماضي وتقييم هذه المقولة الموقف الجديد للمسلمين، وتبين كيف عزلت هذه المقولة الاسلاموفوبيا وجرّدتها من كونها مشكلة ما. وتبني هذه الدراسة فكرة ان التطبيقات الحالية التي تواجه الاسلاموفوبيا لا يمكن النظر اليها على انها مجرد استراتيجياتية يجري تطبيقها لمواجهة فكرة ما. بينما الاسلاموفوبيا تأخذ مشروعيّتها من الكفاح ضد العداء تجاه الأجانب والتمييز العنصري، وتبرز في نفس الوقت طرق إمكانية التعايش المجتمعي.

كلمات مفتاحية : الاسلاموفوبيا، المنظمات الدولية، منظمة التعاون الاسلامي، الإدارة والمقول.

Since the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, Muslims living in European and North American countries have increasingly become the focus of discourses and practices of discrimination, securitization and stigmatization. Their presence, religious, social and political identities have been problematized not only by opinion leaders and the media, but also by governments. In a sense, this has not been an unprecedented phenomenon. Discrimination towards the “Other” has unfortunately been a recurring feature of human societies around the world for centuries. Muslims and Asian populations living in “the West” have been subjected to stereotyping and prejudice for many decades. These practices have long been justified on religious, social and cultural grounds. Religious identity and the ensuing “lifestyles” have been scrutinized long before the September 11 attacks. The Rushdie Affair in the late 1980s, the Gulf War in the early 1990s, Oklahoma Bombing in 1995 and similar incidences have led to periodic increases in the frequency of hostile practices towards those who have been perceived as Muslims. Nevertheless, September 11 attacks have become a significant turning point in the intensification of such practices. In the face of such challenges, opinion leaders, scholars, politicians and others have come to employ the term “Islamophobia” to counter negative representations of Islam and Muslims, and to describe what they have seen as the motivation behind attacks on religious and cultural identity. Islamophobia simply defined as “fear towards Islam and consequently Muslims”, have moved from being a word that was used in scholarly discourses towards a term frequently employed in political and media discourse. It has become the main diagnosis of those seeking to describe and combat discrimination against Muslim populations in the West.

However, Islamophobia had its critics as well. Some have argued that not only the term was inappropriate for what it tried to describe; it was abused by some radical figures who wanted to silence different points of view in the Muslim community.¹ Some argued that it was an exaggeration. Arguably, it was not possible to gauge whether the attacks on Muslims were due to their religious identity or due to a more general hostility towards “foreigners.” Critics have also pointed out that it is not possible to “measure” Islamophobic attacks because often the motivation of the perpetrators was not certain. Such interventions in the formation of the term of

1 Kenan Malik, “Are Muslims hated?,” *Index on Censorship*, 34, No. 2, 2005, pp. 167-172.

Islamophobia generated debates that centered on what we can call the ontology of Islamophobia. That is to say, scholars and others have often concentrated their discussions on problems like whether Islamophobia existed, the accuracy of the term for the phenomena at hand, the features of Islamophobia and how it can be credibly defined and stabilized as a term. These discussions have produced insightful and significant studies on the situation of Muslims living in the West.

While these discussions were most welcome, in this paper I would like to change the terms of debate on Islamophobia by analyzing the anti-Islamophobic discourses and practices from a different perspective. In studying these phenomena, rather than limiting ourselves to the search for a robust definition of Islamophobia, one could adopt a radically empirical attitude and look at how the term is being deployed in different meanings, for different purposes and what the actors are carrying out when they are using this concept. This requires accepting that there are multiple Islamophobias. We should focus not on excluding the false definitions but on the multiple uses that this term has been put to. We should recognize that Islamophobia is not only a descriptive term used to define scientifically a set of events in society. It is at the same time a device operated to make possible the government of individuals in a certain manner. In other words, we should see “Islamophobia” and the practices that seek to fight against it, such as monitoring, reporting, lobbying for policies, convincing others, making statements, etc as practices comprising an anti-policy. The discourse on Islamophobia and practices that people are engaged in to counter it (i.e. anti-Islamophobia) are not only practices of negation or rights claiming. They do not simply seek to stop, eradicate and oppose Islamophobia but while doing that they encourage certain behaviors. They encourage the audiences of their statements to view the world in certain ways; they prioritize certain political and social subjectivities over others; they constitute the social and the political in certain ways. That is to say, we should look at not only what is being opposed in the anti-Islamophobic discourse but also how it is opposed.

In what follows, I will first provide a discussion of some theoretical and conceptual tools that will be employed throughout this paper. This will be followed by a short history of the term Islamophobia.

After that, I will proceed to an analysis of the popularization of the term Islamophobia by the Runnymede Trust. In this section I will try to show how a term employed by some to describe their experiences in (mostly) northern London came to be established as a trope in multiculturalism discourses and then employed to describe situations in the UK. Third, I will look at the adoption and deployment of this term by international organizations such as the United Nations, European Union agencies, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.² By following the term Islamophobia in different contexts I show not only that there are multiple Islamophobias but also that when different actors adopt this term they understand different things from it, but perhaps most significantly, they modify its content in accordance with their own projects of governance.

Conceptual Tools

Conventional theories of International Relations view global politics mostly as an interplay of utility-maximizing states where power is understood as something that can be accumulated and possessed. Global political norms are often dictated by the most powerful states in the international system, and the international institutions reflect the distribution of power within the system.³ Recent post-structuralist contributions inspired by Michel Foucault, however, challenge this conceptualization of power by showing that modern power is not solely exercised by central institutions such as the state. In Foucault, power is not a capacity that could be possessed but rather understood as the “conduct of conduct”.⁴ Modern power is often exercised not through the use or threat of violence by a sovereign state but by a range of institutions that seek to encourage certain sorts of behavior. Modern power is exercised not through violence but by acting upon the actions of others, and not by direct control of individuals but by defining a field of possible action.⁵

2 The Organization of the Islamic Conference changed its name to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in June 2011.

3 G. John Ikenberry and Charles A. Kupchan, “Socialization and Hegemonic Power,” *International Organization*, Vol. 44, No. 3, 1990, pp. 283-315 and John J. Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions,” *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 1994, pp. 5-49.

4 Michel Foucault, “Governmentality” in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (eds.), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 87-104.

5 Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999).

This novel way of conceptualizing political power has significant implications for the study of world politics. When power is understood as the conduct of conduct, it becomes apparent that certain discourses and practices conventionally considered as unrelated to political power are indeed part of the governance of individuals, states or other organizations. With regard to the study of international organizations, this approach makes their micro-physical powers more apparent. As Merlingen argues, international organizations “exercise a molecular form of power that evades... the material, juridical and diplomatic limitations on their influence.”⁶ For instance, in the case of neoliberal economic governance, the neoliberal conduct of states are secured through constituting them as competitive actors with the help of competitiveness indexes prepared by the World Economic Forum.⁷ To give another example, the construction of a security community in Europe is accomplished by the application of disciplinary techniques to states. Their security policies are constantly observed by the OSCE and compared to a golden standard of responsible statehood.⁸

When anti-Islamophobic practices of non-governmental and international organizations are analyzed from this perspective it becomes apparent that these practices cannot be taken simply as negations of Islamophobia or rights-claiming. These practices not only seek to exercise power over other actors but they seek to constitute persons as religious subjects and help construct a post-secular world order. As such, anti-Islamophobic practices can be considered as anti-policies or what can be briefly defined as “schemes to govern unwanted things.”⁹ Anti-policies involve the constitution of subjectivities and the exercise of power. As much as anti-terrorism or anti-poverty practices are political, anti-Islamophobic practices are political as well.

6 Michael Merlingen, “Governmentality: Towards a Foucauldian Framework for the Study of IGOs,” *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 38, No. 4, 2003, pp. 361-84.

7 Tore Fougner, “Neoliberal Governance of States: The Role of Competitiveness Indexing and Country Benchmarking,” *Millennium - Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2, 2008, pp. 303-326.

8 Merlingen, “Governmentality: Towards a Foucauldian Framework for the Study of IGOs”.

9 William Walters, “Anti-policy and Anti-politics: Critical Reflections on Certain Schemes to Govern Bad Things,” *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 2008, pp. 267-288.

Islamophobia: A Short History of the Word

The Oxford English Dictionary defines Islamophobia as “hatred or fear of Islam, esp. as a political force; hostility or prejudice towards Muslims”.¹⁰ According to this source, one of the earliest recorded use of this term is in 1976 in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. In a discussion piece, Anawati uses this term without really defining it, and without using inverted commas.¹¹ He uses the term in a negative way: He argues that if a scholar of Islamic studies, in the course of his studies, arrived at conclusions that would contradict the precepts of Islam, he could well be accused of Islamophobia. Anawati implies that the “penalty of being accused of Islamophobia” makes the dissemination of certain sort of scholarly studies very difficult and amounts to self-censure.¹² The manner that Anawati employs the term suggests that it has been established as a word for some time, and the reader does not need any explanation as to what it means. Another use of term is found in Edward Said.¹³ In a polemical article based on his book *Orientalism*, Said points out to the similarities between anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. He too refrains from giving a clear definition of the term but it is understood that he uses it to mean “hostility to Islam in the modern Christian West”.¹⁴ Said points out that anti-Semitism and Islamophobia are very similar in terms of the “cultural mechanisms” they use and they stem from the same source. These uses of Islamophobia by Anawati and Said have some similarities and contrasts. While the former uses it in a negative sense to disapprove the timidity of Muslims towards studies of Islam from an academic perspective, Said approves and adopts the term to describe some racist phenomena.

Anawati and Said’s use of the term, however, were by no means the first use of the term in the English language. Both Bravo Lopez and Allen report earlier uses of the term in their studies.¹⁵ Bravo Lopez indicates that one of the first recorded use of Islamophobia was by

10 Oxford English Dictionary, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/248449?redirectedFrom=islamophobia#eid>, (accessed June 7, 2013).

11 Georges Anawati, “Dialogue with Gustave e. von Grunebaum,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 7, No: 1, 1976, pp. 123-128.

12 Ibid, p. 124.

13 Edward W. Said, “Orientalism Reconsidered,” *Cultural Critique*, Vol. 1, 1985, pp. 89-107.

14 Ibid, p. 99.

15 Fernando Bravo Lopez, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 34, No: 4, 2010, pp. 556-573 and Christopher Allen, *Islamophobia*, (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2010).

Etienne Dinet and Slimane ben Ibrahim. Dinet was a French painter who later converted to Islam. Their book, *L'Orient vu de l'Occident*, published in 1925 is devoted to the criticism of some orientalist's views on Islam and its Prophet. They employed the term, according to Bravo Lopez, to criticize those who had a skewed notion of Islam and attacked the religion simply to discredit it and its Prophet. That is to say, for Dinet and Ibrahim, Islamophobia was not due to a simple lack of knowledge about Islam and Muslims, it was also an attack of defamation. Islam was deliberately shown as a series of backward customs and the messages of the religion were deliberately misrepresented. Dinet and Ibrahim did not see it necessary to define Islamophobia, but their usage suggested that they viewed it as efforts to "do away with Islam all together".¹⁶ It is also apparent that Dinet and Ibrahim located Islamophobia in the studies of orientalists, rather than in the social and political sphere. These Islamophobic discourses, Bravo Lopez argues, were directed towards the colonial administrations and aimed to show that governments should combat against Muslims and Islam if they wanted to implement their colonial projects. In this way, some Christian missionaries tried to present themselves as allies to the colonialist project. If the "native" populations could be converted to Christianity, Western states could more securely control these territories. Yet, one should also appreciate the multiplicity of the discourse on Islam, Bravo Lopez warns. There were other figures, for instance, Louise Gustvae Binger, a director at the French colonial office, wrote against misrepresentations of Islam in his book *Le péril de l'Islam*, published in 1906. He argued that Europeans should not see Islam as the obstacle to their expansion in the Middle East and Africa. The opposition of the population living in these regions was not due to Islam, but patriotism.

Dinet, Ibrahim and Binger's studies were early instances of the discourse on Islamophobia. After their studies, this discourse was laid dormant for some time. There were some references to Islamophobia in the 1960s and 1980s, but as I have indicated in the opening of this section, these were some passing references rather than studies aiming to explicate and disseminate the concept. The most significant development came in 1997 with the Runnymede Report, which we will turn in the next section.

¹⁶ Bravo Lopez, "Towards a Definition of Islamophobia: Approximations of the Early Twentieth Century", p. 6.

Runnymede Report and the Dissemination of anti-Islamophobic Program

The most significant moment for the rise of the discourse on Islamophobia came in 1997, when a British think-tank known for its work on multiculturalism published a report titled “Islamophobia: a Challenge for Us All.” This report, which will be analyzed in greater detail below, established Islamophobia as a term that was accepted by many as the accurate description of a series of phenomenon experienced by the British Muslims. It was embraced by opinion leaders, including Muslims, and came to be used by the media as a descriptive term. Soon, the quotation marks around this word would disappear and it would be naturalized as a term indicating a challenge for the multicultural society in not only the UK but around the world.

Although the term Islamophobia was not coined by the Runnymede Trust, their report published in 1997 became the most successful and oft-cited study on this topic. Before looking into the details of this report, we should contextualize in the UK in the 1990s. The Runnymede Trust was founded in 1968 to counter racial discrimination and promote multiculturalism. It defines itself as the UK’s “leading independent race equality think tank”.¹⁷ It seems that the think tank was founded at a time when anti-racist initiatives were developing in the country. As Lentin puts it, in the 1960s, there were two basic strands of anti-racism in the UK.¹⁸ One was the “solidaristic” anti-racism of left and trade union activists, and the other was the “self-organization” of the Black communities, that is to say groups who have been subjected to discrimination.¹⁹ As Modood argues, anti-discrimination initiatives in the UK were shaped by this anti-racialism agenda, which was in turn borrowing from the experience of the United States.²⁰ That is to say, discrimination was perceived to be a race, color and ethnic issue. Runnymede’s foundation date of 1968 is also significant in this regard as it coincides with the civil rights movement on the other side of the Atlantic. Religious discrimination was not perceived as an issue in these years, and this approach was apparent in the Race Relations Act of 1976,

17 Runnymede Trust, *Impact Report 2010*, <http://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/pdfs/ImpactReport2010FINALWeb.pdf>, (accessed on March 3, 2011).

18 Alana Lentin, *Racism and Anti-Racism in Europe*, (London: Pluto Press, 2004).

19 *Ibid.*, p. 130.

20 Tariq Modood, “Muslims and the Politics of Difference” in Peter E. Hopkins and Richard Gale (eds.), *Muslims in Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2009), pp. 193-209.

which, as can be guessed from its title, did not cover discrimination due to belief. Except Northern Ireland, religious discrimination did not have any legal existence in the UK. This not only created a gap in the legislation but also shaped the way human rights claims were made. Indeed, Muslims, when they were discriminated due to their religious identity or practices, articulated their grievances in racial terms.²¹ Moreover, in media and political discourses Muslims were included in the group of Asians, with hardly any reference to their beliefs.

All of these started to change in the 1990s. As Birt points out, the Rushdie Affair can be taken as the starting point of Muslim identity politics and the emergence of a Muslim community that increasingly became aware of its religious identity.²² This identity helped constitute British Muslims as discrete from the Asian population and created a community through suffering, according to Birt. The suffering that Birt mentioned was due to the way Satanic Verses and the Islamic Republic of Iran's reaction to it was handled by the media in the UK. Muslims not only regarded the novel highly offensive but they were also disturbed by the manner they were represented as dangerous subjects. Besides, this formation of Muslim community tended to "overcome" national differences like being a Pakistani or Bangladeshi.²³ Muslims were coming together on the basis of religious affiliations rather than through their distant homelands.

This development provided the background to the Runnymede Report. But the report had more recent triggers as well. After the Rushdie Affair, geopolitical events such as the Gulf War and the Oklahoma Bombing, Muslim presence in Western nations were problematized in the media. The mass protests that some Muslims made in 1991 in reaction to the Gulf War were reported in an alarmist tone (e.g. "Trouble at the Mosque") while the Oklahoma bombing which had no links to the Muslims was seen as an Islamic fundamentalist attack on the US, and led to harassment of Muslims.²⁴

21 Ibid.

22 Jonathan Birt, "Islamophobia in the Construction of British Muslim Identity Politics" in Hopkins and Gale, op. cit., pp. 210-227.

23 Allen, *Islamophobia*.

24 The Economist, "Trouble at the Mosque; the Gulf War Reveals the Growing Determination of Britain's Muslims to Find a Political Voice", January 26, 1991, pp. 51-52 and Human Rights Watch, "We are not the enemy", *Hate Crimes Against Arabs, Muslims, and Those Perceived to be Arab or Muslim After September 11*, Human Rights Watch Report, 2002, Vol. 14, No: 6, (available at <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/usa1102.pdf>)

In this environment, Runnymede published a report on Anti-Semitism.²⁵ Although this was a report on the attitudes towards the Jewish community in Britain, it had a section on Islamophobia as well. However, more significantly, the report conceded that the founding philosophy of the Runnymede was now insufficient for multicultural Britain. The think-tank had to take into consideration, the report suggested, that discrimination was not only taking place on the basis of color and race but also culture, language, custom and religion.²⁶ In the course of its work, the Trust's Commission on anti-Semitism found that prejudice against British Muslims was an equally "alarming" issue. Runnymede Trust suggested that a more comprehensive approach should be adopted towards all kinds of "racisms" (including cultural racism) so that "the benefits of cooperation, coordination and shared energy" could be deployed by those concerned.²⁷ The report did not provide a full-fledged definition of Islamophobia, but limited itself to pointing out that it was synonymous with "anti-Muslim feeling".²⁸

So, what were the implications of the report in terms of the government of the conducts of British subjects? The prescription that the report made was a synthesis of liberal democracy and cultural pluralism. It was recognized that there was a tension between the freedom of expression that liberal democracy provided and the cultural values of communities. The latter could be harmed by the former, as can be seen from the Rushdie Affair. The report recognized this as a challenge but did not bring forward direct and concrete suggestions. Rather it suggested that society had to be prudent and avoid such conflicts between liberal democracy and cultural pluralism. Runnymede Trust in its report imagined a democratic polity influenced by two basic forces of the media and opinion leaders. Both were given the task of upholding liberal and multicultural values and manage the conflicts between them. For the media, this would happen through the appointment of "a specific individual within the organization... to be responsible for developing expertise on matters relating to racism in general".²⁹ The opinion leaders, especially those who are influential, were also tasked to intervene in times

25 Runnymede Trust, *A Very Light Sleeper - The Persistence & Dangers of Antisemitism*, (London: Runnymede Trust, 1994).

26 Ibid., p. 9.

27 Ibid., p. 13.

28 Ibid., p. 55.

29 Ibid., pp. 58-59.

of tension. Thus, the report suggested governing at a distance, in Foucaultian terms: The role given to the state and sovereign law was minimal. Islamophobic conduct would not be banned or persecuted but discouraged. Law was only a “safety net” to be deployed in the last instance, while the state’s role was limited to training the teachers to render them sensitive towards discrimination issues. The Report entertained a quite different notion of legislation, which in a sense did not have the force of law, traditionally understood. To quote at length:

Changes in the law would not necessarily guarantee that Britain, or, indeed, any society, would in practice be more just. But some changes would be valuable in providing safety nets, so to speak, at times of anxiety or conflict, and would thus have considerable value in educating public opinion and in signaling the government’s commitment to pluralism.³⁰

As seen from this quotation, to a great extent, law was relieved of its enforcement function but construed as a different kind of knowledge that would govern the population not through penalties or legal violence but through “education” and political signals. The report had a second effect as well. This was the fact that Runnymede Trust distanced itself from a certain type of democratic politics while emphasizing liberal democracy. Instead of democratic forms such as protests, letter writing, and demonstrations the report encouraged a policy-making approach. The problems would be solved not through “mass democratic participation” but through opinion leaders, media, and the policy proposals, which the Runnymede report constituted an example.

Runnymede Trust did not end its work on Islamophobia with this report on anti-Semitism. In 1996, the Trust which now defined itself as “an independent research and social policy agency” established a Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia.³¹ It had a multi-ethnic and multi-religious composition. The Commission prepared a consultation paper and distributed it to councils, city authorities, police departments, Muslim community organizations, universities, etc. In line with the responses to the consultation paper, The Run-

³⁰ Ibid., p. 60.

³¹ Runnymede Trust, , *Islamophobia, a Challenge for Us All, Summary*, <http://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/pdfs/islamophobia.pdf> (accessed on March 1, 2011).

nymede Trust prepared the report “Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All.” The report defined Islamophobia first “as shorthand way of referring to dread or hatred of Islam—and therefore, to fear or dislike of all or most Muslims”.³² This definition was later changed into “phobic dread of Islam... the recurring characteristics of closed views.” The closed views indicated series of views that described Islam as a homogeneous, static, monolithic bloc. This was counterposed with an open view of Islam that described the religion as progressive, multiple, worthy of respect, etc. Thus the report evaluated Islamophobia as a religious issue, as a reaction shown towards Islam itself, rather than Muslim subjects principally. This aspect of the report would prove to be highly controversial. Halliday, for instance, argued that discrimination and similar practices towards Muslims in the UK did not necessarily emanate from a hostility towards the religion.³³ He argued that these phenomena should be thought within the greater context of racism and immigration. What was observable, for him, was not anti-Islamism per se but an anti-Muslim attitude.

The emphasis on the religious dimension in the conception of Islamophobia was apparent in the formation of the Commission as well. As Allen points out, the Commission was very much designed as an inter-faith group.³⁴ In this way, British citizens were constructed primarily as religious subjects. The way they would relate to each other would be through the recognition of religious identities and the open view of Islam would be the model for this respect. In line with the 1994 report, opinion leaders and media were seen as pivotal actors in the government of religious subjectivity. In this way, grass roots anti-racist struggles were excluded.³⁵ Moreover, the analysis of Islamophobia through the lens of open vs. closed views of Islam necessitated that emphasis be put on Islamic identities which were acceptable for the liberal democracy. While British Muslims who are prone to violence were a fact, they were ignored so that Islam could be shown as an “open” religion.³⁶ The open view of Islam also made possible interfaith dialogue. As the report put it, open view meant that Islam would be “seen as an actual or po-

32 As cited in Allen, *Islamophobia*, p. 15.

33 Fred Halliday, “Islamophobia’ Reconsidered,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 22, No: 5, 1999, pp. 892 - 902.

34 Allen, *Islamophobia*.

35 Ibid..

36 Compare Allen, *Islamophobia*.

tential partner in joint cooperative enterprises and in the solution of shared problems”.³⁷ As an anti-Islamophobic measure, open view of Islam implied dialogue and this in turn would neutralize radicalism and confrontation between the state and larger British society on the one hand and Muslim subjects on the other.

Islamophobia as an International Problem

Runnymede’s *Challenge for Us All* report was a success in terms of media coverage. Many British newspapers reported the work of the Commission, and mostly in a positive light. The discovery of Islamophobia by the Runnymede Trust was quite convincing for the media outlets.³⁸ Many Muslim groups also lauded the report and saw it as a significant milestone for the British Muslims.³⁹ The favorable reception of the report became an important asset for those who wanted to express their grievances towards harassment of Muslims and hence made the message of the report more mobile across international sphere. An important turning point in this regard was the deployment of the term, Islamophobia by the United Nations World Conference against Racism.⁴⁰ The conference, infamous for its debates on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, took place in 2001 in Durban, South Africa. At the end of the conference, a declaration was adopted. Article 61 of the declaration read: “we recognize with deep concern the increase in anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in various parts of the world, as well as the emergence of racial and violent movements based on racism and discriminatory ideas against Jewish, Muslim and Arab communities.” Similar to Said’s point, the article linked anti-Semitism and Islamophobia and essentially regarded the latter as a form of racist discrimination.⁴¹ Interestingly, when the draft documents of the conference are studied closely it is seen that the delegates considered Islamophobia not necessarily as a problem experienced by Muslims living in Western societies but a problem in the Middle East. This is apparent from the fact that

37 Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia, a Challenge for Us All, Summary*.

38 Clare Garner, “The British ‘Are Becoming Muslim-Haters’,” *The Independent*, February 21, 1997, p. 7; Paul Myirea, “Laws Needed to Protect British Moslems-Report,” *Reuters*, October 22, 1997; *The Scotsman*, “Prince Urges Tolerance for Islam,” March 1, 1997, p. 3; Alan Travis, “Ban on Religious Discrimination,” *The Guardian*, June 12, 1997, p. 9.

39 Allen *Islamophobia*.

40 United Nations, *Report of The World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (No. A/CONF.189/12)*, (Durban: United Nations, 2001).

41 Said, “Orientalism Reconsidered”.

article mentioned here was listed under the subtitle “paragraphs on the Middle-East and related issues”.⁴² This indicates a significant move on the part of the drafters of the declaration. Islamophobia, which was discovered and inscribed as a phenomenon in Britain, was transferred to the Middle East. This draft implied that Islamophobia was not only a factor in the relations between British Muslims and other British citizens. It was also experienced in the geopolitics of the Middle East, presumably in the conflict between Israel and Palestine. The report included another indicator that showed that Islamophobia was related to this geopolitical problem: In the report itself, anti-Semitism was always mentioned alongside anti-Arabism and Islamophobia. It seemed that the drafters wished to “balance” anti-Semitism with Islamophobia. Indeed this can also be confirmed from the speeches of some Western diplomats in the report. They were critical of the declaration because there was no “independent” reference to anti-Semitism in the declaration.

A second move that internationalized or rather Europeanized the term Islamophobia came with its adoption by the European Union Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC). The EUMC was officially established in 1997, but in 2007 its mandate was widened and it was renamed as the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.⁴³ After the September 11 attacks, the EUMC asked its “National Focal Points” to monitor the situation of Muslims and other minorities in 15 EU states. The focal points were asked to monitor “acts of violence or aggression and changes in the attitude of the EU populations [...], good practices for reducing prejudice, violence and aggression, [and] reactions by politicians and other opinion leaders”.⁴⁴ The term Islamophobia was employed throughout the national reports, but a definition of the term itself was not provided to the national focal points. The definition of their task was monitoring acts against and attitudes towards Muslims, which seemed to exclude acts against the religion itself as an issue to be monitored. In that sense, the report departed from the definition of Runnymede Trust. The national reports differed in the way

42 United Nations, *Report of The World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance*, p. 108.

43 EUMC, “Frequently Asked Questions,” http://www.fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/faq/faq_en.htm, (accessed on January 5, 2011).

44 EUMC, *Summary Report on Islamophobia in the EU After 11 September 2001*, http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/199-Synthesis-report_en.pdf, 2002, (accessed on February 28, 2011), p. 12.

they employed the term Islamophobia. Portugal and Austria used “Islamophobia” (with quotation marks) while Sweden used the term without quotation marks.⁴⁵ The “synthesis” report however used the term Islamophobia in its title.

The reports of the EUMC was not uniform in terms of the resources available to the national focal points, or the methodology and sources used in monitoring the situation of the Muslims in Europe.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the establishment of a monitoring procedure for Islamophobia was significant. This phenomenon, which was initially thought as an occurrence in Britain was turned into a Europe-wide issue by these monitoring reports. This not only improved the credibility of the term itself, but also made it more mobile and applicable to other places by separating it from its national and local context. In terms of the governance of the Islamophobia, the EUMC initiative was again significant. The monitoring of Islamophobia meant that the term was being attached to a surveillance mechanism in the Foucaultian sense.⁴⁷ The EUMC functioned as a surveillance mechanism where potentially all acts of Islamophobia appear on its radar. Nevertheless, the normalization effects of this surveillance were not powerful. That is to say, the surveillance function’s capacity to compare the conduct of the individuals and the government according to an established norm was weak. This was both because Islamophobia was represented as a societal issue and because the definition of Islamophobia was not clearly established. The acts of Islamophobia were seen as rather autonomous acts of the population, and the accountability of the governments in these acts was not clear.

The fact that the EUMC gave the task of monitoring to national focal points, and focused on the media, governments and opinion leaders had implications in terms of governance of Islamophobia as well. While the initiative Europeanized the problem, the distribution of monitoring to national entities constructed national governments and publics as the main sites of intervention in Islamophobia. Despite the weakness of its surveillance, the EUMC affirmed the circulation of Islamophobia in international discourses. Its monitoring

45 EUMC, *Anti-Islamic Reactions in the EU after the Terrorist Acts against the USA*, http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/216-Nat-Report-291101.pdf, 2002b, (accessed on February 28, 2011).

46 EUMC, *Summary Report on Islamophobia in the EU After 11 September 2001*.

47 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish, The Birth of the Prison*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

initiative was also significant and inspired other international agencies. Prime among these agencies was the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the activities of which we now turn to.

The OIC: A Hybrid anti-Islamophobia Program

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) was established in 1969 in Morocco and aimed to combine the “efforts and speak with one voice to safeguard the interests and secure the progress and well-being of [Member States’] peoples and of all Muslims in the world”.⁴⁸ The OIC has come to the attention of the media and scholars especially after the September 11 attacks through its initiatives against Islamophobia. Its initiatives to install international legislation to prevent what it saw as blasphemy against Islam and discrimination against Muslims proved to be controversial. On the one hand some argued that this initiative was a demonstration of the OIC’s “determination to suppress critical commentary on Islam-related themes”.⁴⁹ On the other hand, the organization itself came to project an image that was increasingly embracing democratic governance and human rights. For instance, in its 2008 Summit in Antara, Indonesia, a new charter that underlined human rights and democracy was adopted.⁵⁰

What was significant for our purposes was the establishment of a monitoring body by this organization in 2005. This took place in the 3rd Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Summit Conference that came together in December 2005 as a reaction to the infamous cartoon controversy. The Summit adopted the OIC Ten-Year Program of Action, which included the establishment of an observatory to track Islamophobic acts.⁵¹ There was no geographical limit to the activities of the observatory, but in practice, its monitoring was limited to European and North American countries. Its sources information were the media and studies by think-tanks, scholars, international organizations and NGOs. By utilizing these sources, it

48 OIC, “About OIC,” http://www.oic-un.org/about_oic.asp, 2009, (accessed on January 5, 2011) The Organization has 57 members and the headquarters are located in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

49 Arch Puddington and Christopher Walker, “Saying the Unsayable: Revisiting International Censorship,” *World Affairs*, Vol. 173, No: 4, 2010, pp. 75-83.

50 Asia Pulse, “OIC adopts new charter with Focus on Human Rights,” March 15, 2008.

51 OIC, *The updated Report of the OIC Observatory on Islamophobia to the 35th Session of The Council of Foreign Ministers for the Period of May 2007-May 2008*, http://www.oic-un.org/document_report/observatory_report_final.doc, 2008, (accessed on January 2, 2011).

produces an annual report that summarizes acts of Islamophobia and the activities of the OIC to combat this phenomenon.

The OIC seemed to adopt a definition of Islamophobia that was similar to the one found in Runnymede Trust report. It was “an irrational or very powerful fear or dislike of Islam” but it also had dimensions like “racial hatred, intolerance, prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping”.⁵² The OIC monitoring report referred to issues like immigration, racism and xenophobia and recognized these as problems that exacerbated the problem of Islamophobia. However, it insisted that Islamophobia was essentially a “religion-based resentment”.⁵³ The resentment had its roots in the historical relations between the Muslim world and the West, and in this context, “historical reconciliation” was seen as an important aspect of the resolution of the Islamophobia problem.⁵⁴ The report also indicated, “apologizing to Muslims for the Crusades and the repercussions of America’s so-called war on terror is also a positive development towards fostering tolerance among religions and cultural beliefs and countering Islamophobia”.⁵⁵

One of the main concerns of the authors of the report was enrollment of other, especially Western actors in the anti-Islamophobia program. The monitoring reports put emphasis on convincing their interlocutors of the existence of the phenomenon of Islamophobia. To accomplish that, reports adopted two basic tactics. First, they based their claims of the existence of Islamophobia not on the studies of Muslim scholars but on the reports of Western organizations like the Runnymede Trust, the EUMC, the Council of Europe and the UN. They frequently quoted the texts produced by such authoritative bodies. The second tactic adopted by the OIC was articulation of the global legitimate discourses of the West with acts of Islamophobia. One of these discourses was the fight against terrorism and the maintenance of global security. It was argued that Islamophobia fostered exclusion of Muslim populations from mainstream society as a result of discrimination and harassment. This weakened the identification of the Muslims with their adopted

52 Ibid., p. 8.

53 Ibid., p. 8.

54 Ibid., p. 26.

55 Ibid., p. 26.

country and rendered them easy preys for terrorist recruitment.⁵⁶ The second legitimate discourse that OIC took advantage of was that of human rights. Especially in the 3rd monitoring report, OIC adopted a human rights framework to combat Islamophobia.⁵⁷ This meant, on the one hand, mobilization of international human rights legislation to combat attacks on Islam and definition of the problem as an abuse or human rights. On the other hand, the new framework pointed out to the OIC strategy of carrying Islamophobia to human right venues like the Human Rights Council. In this context, the OIC came to define Islamophobia as a hate crime and took initiatives to ban this through anti-blasphemy legislation.⁵⁸ In recent years, the OIC expanded its utilization of human rights framework to combat Islamophobia. As a result of the initiatives the organization, in 2011, the 16th session of the Human Rights Council of the United Nations adopted the Resolution 16/18 which called on the states to take necessary precautions to prevent the discrimination of persons on the basis of religion.

The OIC's adopted task of combating against Islamophobia was a challenge for the organization. Until the mid-2000s, the OIC was not a very active international body. For instance, it began to liaise with other international organizations and NGOs only very recently, mainly under its new Secretary General, Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu. Its toolbox was very much limited to declarations and extraordinary summits. In addition to these challenges, the OIC was combating Islamophobia in the Western countries where for many freedom of expression had to be interpreted broadly. In other words, it was trying to make a case of human rights to a group of states who saw themselves as the pioneers of human rights and democratic governance. The freedom of expression issue also limited its options in terms of combating Islamophobia through legal means of blasphemy laws.

In the face of these challenges, the OIC had to adopt a strategy that synthesized disciplinary and liberal techniques of government. The monitoring practices of the OIC were explained above. The liberal aspect of the OIC's anti-Islamophobia program was based on the

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 13.

⁵⁷ OIC, *3rd OIC Observatory Report on Islamophobia (May 2009 to April 2010)*, http://www.oic-oci.org/uploads/file/Islamophobia/2010/en/Islamophobia_rep_May_22_5_2010.pdf, 2010, (accessed on January 5, 2011).

⁵⁸ Ibid, pp. 22-24.

governance of Western populations through awareness raising and dialogue. The OIC constituted Western subjects as essentially liberal subjects and sought to conduct their behavior by influencing their mode of self-government. This entailed the exercise of “freedom of expression... linked with a sense of responsibility”.⁵⁹ The liberal subjects could not be constrained from the outside with penalties and similar measures. As long as the Islamophobic acts were considered as expressions of opinion but not discrimination of persons on the basis of religion, legal intervention in the issues was not possible. However, their conduct could be modified by instilling a sense of responsibility in them. This responsibility entailed not only the recognition of Muslims’ religious identity but also an awareness of the repercussions of the individual acts for global peace and security. This awareness should be created through training, education and intercultural dialogue. The OIC argued that one of the tasks were to: “Revise educational syllabi at all levels on both sides, particularly in key disciplines such as history, philosophy, social and human sciences with the aim of presenting a balanced view of other cultures and civilizations”.⁶⁰

The OIC hoped that discrimination and harassment of Muslims could be prevented through the dissemination of accurate knowledge of Islam. The OIC aimed to do this, not through direct government of the Western populations by international legislation but through an intervention in the education of Western subjects. In this way, the OIC hoped to secure the self-government of Western subjects in line with intercultural understanding.

Another tactic of liberal governance of Western subjectivities was cooperation with the media. The OIC saw the latter’s coverage of Islam and Muslims in a negative light as one of the causes of rise of Islamophobia. In line with this, in 2007, a workshop was organized by the OIC in Azerbaijan. “Political leaders, academics, media personalities, international organizations, and representatives of leading NGOs and civil society participated in that Conference”.⁶¹ In this workshop, the OIC sought to influence those active in the formation

59 OIC, *2nd OIC Observatory Report on Islamophobia (June 2008 to April 2009)*, http://www.oic-oci.org/uploads/file/Islamphobia/Islamphobia_rep_May_23_25_2009.pdf, 2009, (accessed on January 5, 2011), p. 4.

60 Ibid., p. 30.

61 OIC, *The updated Report of the OIC Observatory on Islamophobia to the 35th Session of The Council of Foreign Ministers for the Period of May 2007-May 2008*, p. 23.

of opinion in the West. The logic was that if these personalities and institutions could be enrolled to the anti-Islamophobia project, the problem of discrimination and harassment of Muslims and attacks on Islam could be reduced. In this workshop, too, the participants were encouraged to exercise their freedom of expression responsibly. In the Western and Muslim Countries' Forum in Astana in 2008, the OIC furthered this agenda of responsabilization by calling on the journalists to establish a group "to act as advocates for promoting the inter-civilizational dialogue".⁶²

Concluding Remarks

This paper brings a radical empirical perspective on the activities of those who sought to counter Islamophobia. My objective was not to "deconstruct" Islamophobia by exposing its instabilities as a concept. Rather I treated Islamophobia as a mobile "token" that was taken up by multiple actors in various ways. Each adoption of the term Islamophobia did not necessarily mean that the original meaning of the term found in early 20th century was carried forward by new agents. On the contrary, each adoption meant a transformation in the term itself and in its networks. The way Edward Said employed the term was highly different than the way Runnymede Trust did. When the latter took up Islamophobia, it translated it into a concept of anti-racism and multiculturalism and established links with media, government, housing authorities, municipalities, etc. In Runnymede's rendering, Islamophobia was something to be taken into consideration when public funds were being distributed or decisions on urban housing made. The OIC translated it into an issue of geopolitical significance and linked it with discourses of human rights, anti-terrorism, and civilizations. Throughout these modifications, actors alternatively came to emphasize racial and religious aspects of Islamophobia.

While following these translations, I have also demonstrated the programmatic character of anti-Islamophobic activities. These efforts did not merely wish to stop or suppress Islamophobia. They endeavored to accomplish this through different means. While the Runnymede Trust imagined a multicultural society where different identities expressed themselves freely while respecting the other,

62 OIC, "About OIC," http://www.oic-un.org/about_oic.asp, 2009, p. 43 (accessed on January 5, 2011).

the EUMC constituted a geography where different manifestations of Islamophobia could be linked. The OIC, on the other hand imagined a civilizational space of co-existence in peace. While the Runnymede prioritized policy making and sought to liaise with pro-multiculturalism groups, the OIC engaged with governments, diplomats and international organizations.

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